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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4464
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2276
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2141
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2712
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0922
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 3031
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001453

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: POTENTIAL MEJLIS CANDIDATE AND HIS
CITIZEN SUPPORTERS THWARTED IN MARY

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff met a lawyer affiliated with the Ilkinjiler Farmer's Cooperative in Mary at the Embassy-sponsored Presidential Election Reception on November 5. Abdulrahman Bayramov said a citizens group had recently attempted to initiate procedures in order to nominate him as a candidate for Mejlis deputy. According to Turkmenistan's recently revised Law on Mejlis Elections, the nomination of candidates was to have begun on October 31, 45 days before election day.

¶2. (C) Bayramov said that on October 26, several days before nomination was to have begun, his supporters tried to hold an exploratory meeting at a local sports club in Mary in order to discuss the process to nominate him. Three days before they were to meet, they informally notified their district election commission of their intention to meet. (NOTE: According to the new law, a citizens group intending to nominate a candidate must notify the district election commission of the place and date of the planned nomination meeting as well as the names, addresses and dates of birth of those planning to attend. The election law does not require an initiative group that wants to organize a group discussion to do so as well. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) Bayramov said that when they went to the sports club for the planned meeting, a gathering of election commission, police, and MNB officials were waiting for them and told them that their planned meeting was illegal, that it was too late to nominate a candidate, and that they should disperse. When Bayramov pointed out to the officials that the newly revised law indicated that the nomination period would extend to November 14, and that the law did not require them to notify officials of the meeting of their initiative group, the officials present had no knowledge of the election law and insisted that the group go home. Bayramov said that after this, he acquired the text of the new election law electronically, printed out copies of it, and started handing it out to residents in Mary.

¶4. (C) Bayramov indicated that local officials did not want to see him nominated because he had participated in the formation in the early 1990s of the Democratic Party, which

was initially formed to promote democratic values and oppose former President Niyazov and his supporters. (NOTE: In its infancy, the party had a solid following in Mary. One of the party's primary organizers was Mary resident Nazarly Shahberdiyev, who is currently serving a sentence for corruption in the Mary prison. As President Niyazov sought to consolidate his power in the mid-1990s, his supporters took over the party, stripped away its original platform, and converted it to the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, now the only legal political party here. END NOTE.)

15. (C) COMMENT: Bayramov's story is discouraging, and calls into question the idea of nomination of Mejlis candidates by citizen groups. Post intends to investigate further. END COMMENT.
CURRAN